

CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 14, 2010

The City Council Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 14th day of July, 2010, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Atkins, Griffith, Kovach, and Chairman Dillingham

ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Traffic Engineer
Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works
Mr. Mike Rayburn, Assistant Traffic Engineer
Ms. Ellen Usry, Deputy City Clerk

CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING FYE 2010 TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said City Council on June 22, 2010, City Council postponed a contract for traffic calming construction that included eight neighborhoods that had met the qualifying criteria due to concerns from several residents on Walnut Road, which was one of the qualifying streets. Many of the neighborhood residents had concerns about the qualifying process.

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Traffic Engineer, said Staff held an informational meeting with residents on July 8, 2010, as there had been some confusion regarding the process and eligibility requirements, which Staff addressed at the meeting. He said Staff explained the locations and types of devices to be constructed, which were planned to be three medians and a traffic circle. He said Staff also gave the residents an opportunity to change the type of calming device to three permanently mounted feedback signs with a median at the entrance to the neighborhood. Mr. Lombardo said Staff offered residents timeframe to reassess their petition and withdraw their signature if desired. He said during that timeframe, Staff received over 90 e-mails, a dozen phone calls, and several in office visits from residents. He said the original petition consisted of 63.2% in support, but after the meeting, percentage of support dropped to 50.9% making the petition invalid as 60% support is required. He provided a list of the residents who changed their vote with 27 votes changed to No and 6 votes changed to Yes. Mr. Lombardo said Walnut Road will be removed from the contract being considered by Council on July 27th and the contractor has agreed to the revised scope of work.

Mr. Lombardo said the FYE 2010 Traffic Calming Program will consist of 19 speed tables and three traffic circles for a cost of \$96,500. He said \$215,535.61 is available and Staff will ask Council's approval for a change order to the contract in the amount of \$43,775 to add three speed tables on Garver Street and eliminate devices for Walnut Road. He said there will be approximately \$125,000 remaining with \$9,000 to be used for incidental charges associated with installation of traffic calming devices such as testing, striping, and signage. He said the balance of \$116,000 could be used for other traffic calming related activities and programs.

Chairman Dillingham asked what the consensus of the Walnut Road neighborhood was regarding feedback signs and Mr. O'Leary said there was no clear consensus. Councilmember Kovach, who attended the meeting, said residents were offered the feedback signs with a median at the entrance and someone requested the median be removed from the equation and, at that time, a majority of the group said they would support the feedback signs, without the median. He said residents were then asked how many wanted the median and it was about 50-50. He said Staff asked how many would support the median being removed from the equation with only speed signs being installed and only seven or eight people responded positively. Councilmember Kovach felt that residents believed if the traffic calming petition failed, they would get some type of traffic calming through the speed feedback signs, which do not require a petition. Mr. Lombardo said he has told residents the City can place the signs as a pilot project, but Staff would like to have a sense that the neighborhood wants this. He said this could be done through the Neighborhood Association with a letter of request without a petition, but any introduction of a median would require a petition.

Councilmember Kovach said the controversy with the medians and traffic circle was due to concerns about the steep hill on Walnut Road and winter road conditions. He said residents felt more problems would be created when maneuvering through the street with a median or traffic circle. He said he spoke with Staff about painting striping at the entrance as a temporary solution. Councilmember Griffith asked if there used to be a median on Walnut and Mr. O'Leary said yes, approximately ten years ago, but it was poorly designed and removed for that reason at the request of the neighborhood.

Chairman Dillingham suggested installing the small yellow speed "buttons" and Councilmembers liked that idea. She felt that Walnut Road would be a good area to test the speed feedback signs because it is a subdivision with one large cut-through street that has a huge speeding problem. She said this would be a good opportunity to test the modality of street interdiction for very little cost and have verifiable data on the speeding problem. Councilmember Kovach said several citizens at the meeting raised concerns regarding an enforcement component to address speeding. Mr. O'Leary said he explained that the speed signs could be permanently placed, but still removable, and tracked for two years to see if this type of speed calming program worked for the neighborhood. Councilmember Dillingham felt that speed signs are less invasive and cost effective since they are solar powered and Councilmember Kovach said there had been concerns about the brightness of the lights at night and said a timing mechanism could be installed on the signs to adjust the brightness based on neighborhood feedback. Councilmember Kovach said a possible outcome is that as the City grows, there will be a lot of Home Owner's Associations (HOA) and they may choose to sponsor these types of calming programs.

Councilmember Atkins asked if other neighborhoods were as highly ranked as Walnut Road as far as traffic calming speeds or are there others neighborhoods that might be better suited for a pilot program and Councilmember Griffith said he thought Northcliff is one that has a lot of contention about speed. Mr. O'Leary agreed, but said the Northcliff neighborhood was unable to get the required percentage of signatures and speed signs could be placed in neighborhoods that were unable to get the petition for speed humps. Councilmember Atkins asked if there could be repercussions from other neighborhoods that could not meet the criteria and wanted what the City is proposing on Walnut Road and Councilmember Kovach said that Walnut Road is unique because of its physical layout, the Council's new criteria policy caused a lot of misunderstandings, and the City should offer the neighborhood some type of enforcement. Councilmember Atkins said he was concerned because there were areas in his Ward that could not meet the petition criteria and would want that program as well.

Mr. Lombardo said Staff assesses the need for speed calming and Walnut Road had the highest percentile of speed violations so he felt Walnut Road would be the best area for the pilot program. Mr. O'Leary felt that if the pilot program is successful, there would be funds for the program in other areas and Chairman Dillingham agreed.

Chairman Dillingham felt that Northcliff would be an area for a second pilot program and Councilmember Griffith felt that Jones Street would be another area because of traffic volume as well as speeding problems. Mr. Lombardo said Council had helped establish a points system to prioritize projects and Northcliff has the most points. He said Staff had discussed placing speed signs in several targeted neighborhoods instead of grouping signs in a single neighborhood and Councilmembers felt this idea was feasible.

Chairman Dillingham asked what the outcome of traffic calming discussions on Morren Drive had been and Councilmember Griffith said adjustments had been made to the locations of the speed humps that satisfied the unhappy citizens.

Mr. O'Leary said an area to watch will be Brookhaven Boulevard because it is a large area with lots of traffic and the signs will be across from the park, which is a very busy park with lots of pedestrian traffic and he believes there will be a lot of negative feedback. Chairman Dillingham felt that schools and parks were areas that need traffic calming the most to force drivers to slow down.

Mr. O'Leary said the traffic calming construction contract and change order will be submitted for Council's approval on July 27, 2010.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "FYE 2010 Program Update Traffic Calming to City Council Oversight Committee" dated July 14, 2010
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "City of Norman Informational Meeting about Walnut Road Traffic Calming Project Presentation to Sherwood Forest Residents" dated July 8, 2010
3. Support Petition Vote Changes by Sherwood Forest Residents following Walnut Road Informational Meeting at City of Norman Complex on Thursday, July 8, 2010

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.